

# THE MEASURE

## A JOURNAL OF POETRY



**In This Number:**

Louis Untermeyer, Babette Deutsch, Leonora  
Speyer, and others — — — — —

Mr. Braithwaite's Decennary — — — — —

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*A Journal of Poetry*

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## Inhibited

I COULD not pity your pain but I pitied the branches  
Losing what little the frost had left them to hold.  
I could not warm you with sorrow; I turned to the sparrows,  
Clustered like heavy brown blossoms puffed out by the cold.

They could not help me. I looked at my hands: they were helpless;  
Strange and detached, less related to me than the birds.  
Baffled, I called on the mind: it carried me, floundering,  
Lost among meaningless phrases, tossed in a welter of words.

Too great for my blundering comfort, your anguish confused me.  
From a great distance, I saw you standing alone.  
Frozen and stark, in a black iron circle of silence,  
I could not pity your pain; I could scarcely pity my own.

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## Flushed Tanágras

[for H. D.]

**D**RENCHED in sharp moonlight,  
whiter than silver cress against the snow,  
whiter than wool-combed seas,  
at first they seem  
stone-polished lyrics,  
gestures frozen in space.

Then the arrested moment  
glows with the inner light that filters  
through a thin ivory vase —  
half shine, half shadow.  
And the shy, flower-like figures,  
trembling tanágras,  
flush into sudden life,  
scattering a spray of glistening notes  
from violet-perfect throats,

—*Louis Untermeyer.*

## To Thomas Hardy, Dark Poet

**O** PINE-TREE crag-set  
Above sobbing sea-beaches,  
In the dusk of whose boughs  
Moans wisdom wind-borne from bitter sea-reaches,

More beautiful than symmetry  
Your writhen silhouette,  
Dark-plumed against clouds!

—*Harold Hoffman.*



## Mist Over the Dolomites

I THOUGHT, these shall endure  
Though the sky tumble!  
But now. . . with one pale hand  
They are removed from off the summer land  
Without a sigh or rumble.

This thing I know;  
The mist is stronger than these granite hills,  
And when it wills  
They go.

And I know too  
Its silence is the greater;  
It can subdue  
Their mighty hush to less  
Than nothingness.

And yet it grants to me  
Enough of path to tread;  
And one dim tree  
To keep me comforted.

—*Leonora Speyer.*

## Colloque Metaphysique

ONE said:

The mountains comfort me,  
bulking their storm-heaped question against the sky.  
All things are sentient: cities and vain tides  
cry with my human cry:  
Whose chaos was our womb?  
What is this dark smell of oblivion?—  
The foam, a moment stable in my hand,  
the glass-eyed fish, creatures that crawl and fly,  
and the brute pavement,  
these too comfort me,  
these too abide the hopeless, hammering Why?

And one said:

No,  
Your question dangles like a tongueless bell.  
Does purpose, then, hold in men's lives so well  
that there must be some purpose in an earth  
which litters tragedy with every birth?  
Your only ladder is your reason, —  
climb!  
But it must lean against a wall as high  
as the impenetrable sky,  
whose thickness is all that we know of time.

The third one said:

You seem an alien, being comforted  
by the dumb mountains and the rootless sea.  
Not all the lovers who on unquiet beds have sucked their bitter joy  
can comfort me  
because my pain is colored like their own.  
As pigs who huddle in a sty  
are warmed by their familiar stench,  
all those who breathe and suffer and must die  
may let a cemetery satisfy  
their instinct for a home. This self-same earth  
is plough-land and worm's vomit and man's trench.

And you

who will not watch that bell in the dumb air  
of a world that may have neither cause nor end, —  
I know you borrowed patience from despair  
till you have some to lend.

Stand on the ladder's topmost rung and find  
a street where blind men grope to see the blind,  
trace traffic on a lighted drawbridge, thrown  
from the unknown across to the unknown.

There is no peace, there is no comfort here,  
But a thin bulwark of theatres and wars  
thrown up between our terror and the stars.  
When we seem safe, we are still afraid of fear.

Talk is a windy thing that clears  
the fog above these yeasty years,  
but we shall seldom talk of this again;  
for let the winds, the winnowers, blow  
our mists away, we needs must go  
on darker waters, then.

—*Babette Deutsch.*

# Lundy

## I.

**L**UNDY lies silent under granite peaks.  
Deer graze her streets at dusk. The east wind speaks  
Where the blue spruce tops cool the canyon wall;  
Other than this no life is there at all.  
Yet there is scarce a broken window pane  
Within these houses left to sun and rain,  
And through the window gleam the things men used,  
Lying disordered there, but unabused;  
Hand-hammered andirons, monstrous water pails,  
Stoves, lanterns, spiders black on rusty nails,  
And striped blankets, chequered table cloths,  
With colors still unmarred by mould or moths.

One road goes east from Lundy, chocked with grass;  
One trail climbs west and south to Lundy Pass,  
Tangles in crags and snow and plunges free,  
Tumbling pine-shadowed toward Yosemite.  
A stage once churned the dust on Lundy's road,  
Mules hauling ore shook bells before their load,  
High-caverned in a crease of canyon wall  
The mine-mouth engine sent its shattering call  
And loosed at dusk a tide of bare-armed men  
To storm the doors of Lundy. Lights shone then,  
The clack of chips came sharp through bar room doors,  
Tunes drowsed above the swish of feet on floors,  
Store windows glittered, movie music played,  
And Lundy bloomed, — a flower that men had made  
Among high ridges, all its petals gay  
Where pines were dusk, snows white, and granite gray.



## II.

May Lundy's mine above the canyon floor  
Still folds, they say, its heart of yellow ore.  
A sudden ghostly word beyond the hills  
Echoed, and stopped its hundred ringing drills.  
And life went then as life might leave a land  
Where waves of garden dusk the desert sand  
If high and far some mountain gate should close,  
And snow-born water, prisoned with its snows,  
Plainward should boil no more, and ditch and flume  
Should crack in the sun, and orchards cease to bloom . . . .  
Nothing had failed in drift or hoist or mill.  
Death walked far off — some dusty codicil  
Was mouthed in a dusty city . . . Wife and son  
Wrangled with sisters . . . There was war begun  
For Lundy that had hushed the engine blast,  
Bade music cease, locked doors, called forth the last  
Belled mule in dust, never to jingle back,  
Poured the last drinks, put all the chips in stack  
Forever, and sent the stage with silent men  
Bewildered, nursing hopes that soon again  
Far ghostly words might sound, and idle drills  
Dig down for ribs of gold in granite hills.

## III.

Lundy was cheap and little, you will say,  
Built in a month — well ended in a day;  
Mourn for the nobler cities men began, —  
Cnossus, Mycenae, Sardis, Ispahan,  
All death and dust now, name on lovely name,  
Ash of the ages all their purple flame.

Yet who cares not that Gyges lost his ring,  
Or Tarcondemos made an offering  
Of forty milk-white bulls? Deep-drowned in time,  
Garbled in night their passion, patience, crime,  
Buried beneath old years, long worlds away . . .  
But Lundy is the graveyard of today.  
Grassed floor and harsh, snow-shadowed trail men tread,  
Living, to look upon themselves, the dead.  
This is not Lydia lost, Irán, or Crete;  
Rails red with rain and grasses catch their feet;  
Under the yellowing mill roof silence seals  
Not Egypt, but the world of light and wheels.  
Ghost-like they pass these dead but living things,  
Whisper in ghostly streets where no word rings,  
Their houses here are dumb, their lights are out,  
A solemn Charlie Chaplin struts about  
In colored poster, faded now and strange  
As a shape in sand-pocked basalt. Chance and change  
Are strong and sudden and they shattered here  
Enough to cool hot hearts with clutching fear  
Of what those hands can work that stole away  
The joy of years from Lundy in a day,

#### IV.

Lundy lies silent in a seeming death.  
Nothing but deer at twilight and the breath  
Of wind among the spruce tops makes a stir  
Where the sheer walls of granite shadow her.  
But some who pass have turned the gray remains  
Of unmilled ore, and tell of yellow veins  
Lying between the mountain folds for men  
To bring to sunlight if they dig again.  
And some have chipped the road wall and have shown  
Fragments of green asbestos. "This alone

Would lay the rails to Carson!" And their eyes  
Shine then with visions, magic truths or lies.  
The land where Lundy lived and sleeps is new,  
Ruin is swift there, resurrection too;  
Sardis is sand, — no days of trumpeting  
Across its dust will ever start a king,  
But these new hills where life we know has fled  
May make their miracle with what is dead.  
Far, ghostly words may bring a noiseless street  
Ascending bells, the dust and drum of feet,  
The stage may tear the turf-sown road, old bars  
Shoot groaning back, and chimnies murk the stars;  
The mine-mouth engine then may rouse, and call  
Miners and muckers down the canyon wall,  
New lights may kindle, clack of chips be loud,  
Movie house music jangle at the crowd,  
Till Lundy, mourned by men for dusty bones,  
Bursts living through the husk of charnel stones,  
Shakes free of cold, webbed sleep, shouts to her heights,  
And struts the days' symbolic blacks and lights —  
Bondaged to exultation, sweat, and tears, —  
To live and laugh again a thousand years!

—*Frank Ernest Hill.*

# Ten Songs by the Dead Singer in Kioto

## I

THE brown birds swarm.  
I can look at any hour through the broken garden-house  
And see them on the sky.  
But the red-bird has not burned through March,  
And not an orchard-twigg  
Has grown uneven over night.

## II

I will sing today.  
There was dusk along the river-edge  
And in the birch-grove where we stood.  
Three torches flared where the city stood.  
And then the birches let themselves be drowned  
In darkness, and the river held but twisted fire,  
Because you spoke.

## III

You brought the pussywillow stems,  
Chosen among the golden trumpet-flowers,  
And you drew them down my cheek  
And I felt there the cool wet drops  
Of silver.

## IV

I saw you in the orchard,  
And you reached for the lowest amber of a pear.  
And I saw you bend, in a darkened hour,  
Drooped to the shadow of a sterile bough.

## V

O when the white flakes of the bell shook  
Down through the rained-on leaves  
You would not speak, your eyes were black.  
But when the silence came, your fingers burning mine  
Were strips of bronze.



## VI

We watched.  
Up the twisted ribbon to the hill they took him.  
So great a silence for a child.  
A drop of dew is taken from a white rose-petal  
By the thirsty sun.

## VII

How the rain drips from the rotting eave  
And with a silver word  
Startles the goldfish to a sudden turn  
In the green-black pond:  
This is my song today.

## VIII

For the emperor a box of gold  
And the deepest chiselling of ivory.  
For me the brown roots and the ragged green  
And the lightest foam of the cherry-tree.

## IX

On the square of silk  
The jewel-threads are clustered,  
Uneven and rare.  
The night above your garden is the same.

## X

From the curved promise of the bridge  
We stared upon the crowded stream,  
At the red fruit and the yellow limbs.  
And the cries rose and the singing  
And laced our silence into death.  
And you went from the highness of the bridge  
When the stream was thronged,  
And I am in my empty house,  
Singing.

—George O'Neil

## The Moon in a Mirror

**H**ERE in my hands, locked in a silver rim,  
I hold the moon! It is so small a thing  
Become, that now no terror stirs to dim  
My breathless tenure, crystal wondering.  
Intense quiet silver, burning unconsumed!  
I can not touch it—it is safe from me;  
No mark of mine can ever show where loomed  
This transiently immured immensity  
Now radiantly abysmal in the glass.  
But soon I can not hold it longer—soon  
Slow-moving from my tiny grasp will pass  
The frozen and diminished moon.

—*Faith Baldwin.*

## She Will Take Thee

**L**AY thy head upon earth's breast,  
Even now earth loves thee best;  
And when all things else are past  
She will take thee at the last.

When all other loves are done,  
Earth will be thy blessed one;  
Thou with her wilt have thy bed,  
And by her be comforted.

—*Miriam Vedder.*

# The Measure & A Journal of Poetry

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ACTING EDITOR: KENNETH SLADE ALLING

ASSISTANT EDITOR: WINIFRED WELLES

## The English Sonnet

The English Sonnet, by T. W. H. Crosland. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

**T.** W. H. CROSLAND is the author of *The English Sonnet* and on evidence a most dogmatically positive individual. He seems to think his is the only sane and adequate study of this form.

With remembrance of other writers on the subject and having read his book through now for the third time we are ready to take issue—with those that disagree with him.

Sooner or later someone had to come along and turn out what we have lacked, an intelligent and incisive volume dealing with the sonnet.

Mr. Crosland has done it—in the main.

In sewing up his deductions he seems to find it necessary here and there to quote from Alfred Tennyson. (At least once adversely, it is true.) Now we have never been able to decide whether Tennyson was a poet or just some Edgar Guest gotten up in a dress suit. You needn't bother to enlighten us, reader. We often argue with ourselves on this subject and three's a crowd.

And Mr. Crosland unmercifully pans Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". He says there are too many *i*'s in one stanza and in the lyric as a whole the *there's* and *here's* are not properly balanced.

But just the same we shall go stubbornly on wishing we had written that poem.

We fear Mr. Crosland is a bit too fond of sublimity—which is good enough in its way only there is so damned little of the real stuff around. So much passes for sublime that is only bombastic.

Our own idea of the sublime is the sestet of Wordsworth's "Mutability", which, by the way, Mr. Crosland does not include. But regardless it appeals to us as the supreme sonnet of the language.

There is however one of Wordsworth's ordinarily published with his best which is utterly flawed by a mixed metaphor in the final lines. We refer to "Sleep"—

blessed barrier between day and day,  
Dear mother of fresh thoughts.

It likewise is not printed in this book. It should not be printed in any book of fine sonnets and particularly not as one of Wordsworth's best—which are conceded incomparable.

Mr. Crosland looses his widest praise on the third quatrain of Drayton's "Love Parting".

As a matter of interest note how critics differ. For this that Crosland would frame in fire J. A. Noble in his essay "The Sonnet in England" has the following comment, "the single metaphor in the sestet is a little marred by the double personification of Love and Passion, which is rather confusing and might easily have been avoided."

But then Mr. Noble is not an authority and Mr. Crosland is—or so we like to believe.

He sets a stupendous standard and holds to it.

When we read such a collection as Robertson's Golden Book of English Sonnets which intimates in its title that it is a gathering of splendid sonnets and the last third of which embodies a good deal of immaculate junk we begin adequately to value Crosland's dogmatism.

Sharpe's "Sonnets of This Century" would seem to have been made chiefly for the glorification of D. G. Rossetti.

Dante Gabriel, who had a vogue in his time comparable only to certain vogues today, is, as far as the inclusion in our book of his once loudly hailed sonnets is concerned, somewhat conspicuously forgotten—from which one might draw a nice analogy regarding some of the "today's."



Rossetti's best sonnet work is found in his translations.

We have taken down our "Dante and His Circle" and opened again to those fourteen delectable lines in which Cino Da Pistora, confessing his unsteadfast heart, answers D. Alighieri.

And there are many others as engrossing and as fine.

"It is doubtful whether since the time of Shakespeare a really satisfactory sonnet in that form (Shakespearean) has been written." So Mr. Crosland—of the other structure which "we shall call the modern English sonnet" based on Petrarch he says in effect—from the following there can for the true sonnet be no deviation—only two rhymes in the octave and a hard and fast scheme—no rhymed couplets integral or terminal in the sestet—the octave one poem and the sestet definitively another poem—but arising out of what has gone before.

Let us plead with our contemporaries at least to read this book.

What is it that makes a sonnet great: what is it in a poet that can persuade words—radiant entities of sound—to group themselves in an immortal arrangement?

Poets—little fragments of the ego of God—how many have used this form and how many thousand sonnets they have written "were work for Archimedes".

And of the multitude how few remain and will remain.

Now and then a Wordsworth lives for some hour with the untransient verities and builds, in their company, a "Westminster Bridge" or "The World Is Too Much With Us", but for the most of sonnet makers, they "must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God" not in the anthologies.

But the consolation of minor men is that "the magic hand of chance" touches sometimes even the least worthy of them, and who would not lose all to leave one great sonnet?

—*Kenneth Slade Alling*

## *Mr. Braithwaite's Decennary*

*(As Published by the Boston Transcript)*

WITH these, his decisions of 1922, Mr. Braithwaite celebrates a decennary.

During this time he has sold out neither to the soft school of the plaintive ancients not to those who believe that poems should be misshapen fragments of ungrammatical granite. He has genially considered each and all between and gathered his collections with sincerity.

We have never yet seen an anthology with which we have not quarrelled and here likewise are unwarranted inclusions and unwarranted exclusions—why as example is Louise Nicholl omitted? But Homer nods and lapses occur and if (to paraphrase Old Bill) you know of a better annual anthology go to it. We don't.

That Mr. Braithwaite has printed no supreme poem in any of his collections is not to be scored against him. If there had been anything so tremendous as Emily Dickinson (immeasurable eternity rattles in the tiny pods of her stanzas); if there had been any picture vividly adequate of beauty as of ships asleep in port, black hulls splashed here and there with sea rust, the gold leavings of the waves; if there had been any supreme poem be sure he would have printed it.

There is no faith today for great poems. The source of them is dry. The world is too twitchingly nervous, too inhibited, too impotent vitally to proceed to the consummation of its desires.

Its requisite is some vast revival of faith—happy world if before this arrives it shall not have undergone the discipline of despair.

—*Kenneth Slade Alling*

## CONTRIBUTORS

LOUIS UNTERMAYER, poet and critic, although new to the pages of *The Measure*, needs no introduction to its readers.

HAROLD HOFFMAN lives in New Brighton, Staten Island. He is a contributor to various periodicals.

BABETTE DEUTSCH and her husband Avrahm Yarmolinsky, the editors of an *Anthology of Russian poetry*, are now at work on a similar collection from the German.

LEONORA SPEYER has recently returned from a summer in Europe.

FAITH BALDWIN, Mrs. H. H. Cuthrell, is now living in Brooklyn.

MIRIAM VEDDER has contributed to contemporary magazines.



# The Measure

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